

Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
-----230942Z 051987 /12
O 230821Z MAR 77
FM AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 492

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 ISLAMABAD 2786

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MNUC, PARM, PK

REF: NUCLEAR ISSUES

REF: ISLAMABAD 2682,

1. SINCE REPORTING MY TALK ON MARCH 18 WITH PRIME MINISTER BHUTTO (REFTEL), DEVELOPMENTS HERE LEAD ME TO BELIEVE THAT THE OPPORTUNITIES FOR MEANINGFUL DIALOGUE WITH BHUTTO HAVE ALL BUT VANISHED IN THE NEAR TERM. I REPORT THIS WITH THE GREATEST RELUCTANCE AS I HAD, UP TO NOW, RETAINED THE STRONG PERSONAL HOPE THAT I COULD SEE THIS ISSUE ON ITS WAY TO SOLUTION PRIOR TO MY DEPARTURE FROM THE POST. ALSO, AFTER FURTHER REFLECTING ON MY TALK WITH BHUTTO, I NOW BELIEVE HE WAS CONVEYING TO ME A POSITION CONSIDERABLY HARDER THAN HE HAD TAKEN WHEN WE SUSPENDED OUR DIALOGUE LAST JANUARY.

2. THE DAY FOLLOWING MY DISCUSSION WITH BHUTTO, KARACHI ERUPTED IN A DEGREE OF VIOLENCE THAT HAS REQUIRED THE ARMY TO RESTORE ORDER AND THE IMPOSITION OF A STRINGENT CURFEW TO PREVENT FURTHER VIOLENCE. THE OPPOSITION'S DEMONSTRATED ABILITY TO CLOSE DOWN PAKISTAN'S LARGEST CITY AND ONLY PORT PRESENTS BHUTTO WITH DOMESTIC PROBLEMS OF THE GREATEST MAGNITUDE. HIS RESPONSE HAS BEEN TO RELEASE LEADERS OF THE OPPOSITION ARRESTED ONLY DAYS

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BEFORE AND TO RENEW HIS OFFER OF DIALOGUE. THE OPPOSITION, HOWEVER, VIEWING THIS AS A SIGN OF WEAKNESS ON THE PM'S PART, HAS SO FAR REJECTED BHUTTO'S OFFER AND THE CONFRONTATION CONTINUES WITH THE POSSIBILITIES FOR UGLY CONSEQUENCES INCREASING DAILY.

3. ALTHOUGH I RECOGNIZED THAT THE CONTEXT OF OUR TALKS WAS

CERTAINLY ALTERED BY THE GROWING DOMESTIC CRISIS, I NEVERTHELESS WENT AHEAD WITH MY PLANS TO REVIEW THE NUCLEAR ISSUE WITH AZIZ AHMED WHOM I MET ON MARCH 21. HE HAD ALREADY REVIEWED THE NOTES OF MY TALK WITH BHUTTO. IT WAS APPARENT THAT HE FULLY UNDERSTOOD MY POINTS ON THE DIFFICULTIES ASSOCIATED WITH IMPENDING TRANSFERS OF REPROCESSING EQUIPMENT OR TECHNOLOGY. HOWEVER HE ARGUES FORCEFULLY THAT IN THE GOP'S VIEW IT COULD NOT SUSPEND THESE SHIPMENTS PENDING RESUMPTION OF OUR DIALOGUE BECAUSE TO DO SO WOULD IMPLY THAT PAKISTAN HAD ABANDONED ITS DETERMINATION TO GO AHEAD WITH THE REPROCESSING PLANT, AND KNOWLEDGE THAT IT HAD DONE SO WOULD INEVITABLY BECOME PUBLIC. AZIZ AHMED REPEATED BHUTTO'S ARGUMENTS FOR A DELAY IN FURTHER CONSIDERATION OF THIS

PROBLEM UNTIL A NEW GOVERNMENT IS FORMED, AND AN ORDERLY CABINET LEVEL REVIEW OF ELAN'S POSITION CAN BE UNDERTAKEN. I READ

BHUTTO'S AND AZIZ AHMED'S VIEWS ON THIS POINT TO MEAN THAT THE GOP CANNOT CONSIDER TAKING ANY STEPS ON THE REPROCESSING ISSUE WHILE THE OPPOSITION HERE IS MOUNTING A SUSTAINED EFFORT TO TOPPLE BHUTTO FROM POWER.

4. AGHA SHAHI REMAINS OUT OF TOWN BUT MAY RETURN IN A FEW DAYS. IF SO, I WILL GO OVER THE GROUND AGAIN WITH HIM, BUT DO NOT ANTICIPATE THAT HIS POSITION WOULD BE ANY DIFFERENT FROM BHUTTO'S OR AZIZ AHMED'S.

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CORRECTED COPY (TEXT)

5. AFTER REFLECTING FURTHER ON MY MARCH 18 TALK WITH BHUTTO, I THINK I CAN CONCLUDE THAT HIS POSITION ON THE ISSUE HAS HARDEN-

ED. AS BHUTTO SEES THE PROBLEM, THERE ARE THREE POSSIBLE NEGOTIATING PHASES INVOLVING VARYING OUTCOMES: (1) PAKISTAN GOES AHEAD WITH THE REPROCESSING PLANT STRINGENTLY SAFEGUARDED AS AGREED WITH THE FRENCH AND THE IAEA; (2) PAKISTAN NEGOTIATES WITH THE USG ADDITIONAL SAFEGUARDS AND CONDITIONS THAT WOULD ASSURE US THERE CAN BE NO DIVERSION OF PLUTONIUM FOR AN EXPLOSIVES PROGRAM; AND (3) PAKISTAN AND THE USG NEGOTIATE AN AGREEMENT UNDER WHICH PAKISTAN FOREGOES THE REPROCESSING PLANT AND THE US AGREES TO ASSIST PAKISTAN WITH SOME OF ITS SECURITY, ENERGY AND ECONOMIC REQUIREMENTS. IN JANUARY, IN THE WANING DAYS OF THE LAST ADMINISTRATION, I BELIEVED THAT BHUTTO HAD ADVANCED TO A WILLINGNESS TO CONSIDER THE THIRD PHASE AND THAT WAS WHERE WE WOULD RESUME DISCUSSIONS AFTER HIS ELECTION. IT IS NOW APPARENT TO ME THAT BHUTTO INTENDS TO START DE NOVO WITH AN EFFORT TO CONVINCE THE NEW ADMINISTRATION THAT THE AGREEMENT WITH THE FRENCH ALREADY PROVIDES SUFFICIENT SAFEGUARDS TO MEET THE PRESIDENT'S NON-PROLIFERATION GOALS, OR, FAILING IN THAT, TO PERSUADE US TO NEGOTIATE ADDITIONAL BILATERAL SAFEGUARDS THAT SATISFY THESE GOALS. ONLY IN A THIRD PHASE, AND MOST RELUCTANTLY, WOULD BHUTTO BEGIN DISCUSSIONS ON A CONCEPT THAT INVOLVED GIVING UP THE REPROCESSING PLANT. IN THIS CONTEXT, BHUTTO'S APPARENT DETER-

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MINATION NOT TO DELAY EQUIPMENT AND TECHNOLOGY CAN BE SEEN AS PART OF HIS EFFORT TO KEEP THE DIALOGUE FROM MOVING TO PHASE THREE, BEFORE HE HAS HAD AN OPPORTUNITY TO PRESENT HIS CASE IN PHASES ONE AND TWO, OR AT LEAST UNTIL HE IS OUT OF THE WOODS IN HIS CURRENT INTERNAL SCENE. THE DILEMMA WE AND HE FACE, HOWEVER, IS THAT BY THE TIME WE REACH THE THIRD PHASE -- IF WE DO -- DELIVERIES MAY HAVE GONE AHEAD TO THE POINT WHERE EITHER IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SYMINGTON AMENDMENT (OR AN EXPLANATION OF WHY IT IS NOT BEING IMPLEMENTED) BECOMES UNAVOIDABLE.

6. WITH THE SITUATION AS I HAVE DESCRIBED IT ABOVE, I DO NOT BELIEVE THAT I CAN USEFULLY GO BACK TO BHUTTO AT THIS TIME. WE ALL KNOW THAT THERE IS A POINT BEYOND WHICH IT CAN BECOME COUNTER-PRODUCTIVE TO PRESS ON EXTERNAL MATTERS WITH A GOVERNMENT IN DEEP INTERNAL TROUBLE. IN MY OPINION WE HAVE NOW REACHED THIS POINT. IF THE DEPARTMENT BELIEVES IT FEASIBLE, IT MAY BE DESIRABLE TO APPROACH THE FRENCH ONCE AGAIN ARGUING FOR FURTHER DELAY IN TRANSFERS, (EVEN AFTER CONTRACTS ARE SIGNED IF THAT IS POSSIBLE) ON THE GROUNDS THAT WE ARE NOT ABLE TO ENGAGE THE GOVERNMENT HERE MEANINGFULLY UNTIL THE PRESENT CRISIS IS RESOLVED AND A SECURE GOVERNMENT IS FORMED. OUR MOST OPTIMISTIC ESTIMATE FOR THIS, IF IT IS TO HAPPEN UNDER BHUTTO'S LEADERSHIP, IS MID-APRIL.

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